



CUSTOMER RESPONSE POLICY

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REVISION HISTORY

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1. PURPOSE

This policy establishes the framework that supports how EGSC will respond to customer contacts within the limits of Council resources.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Work in partnership with our customers through fostering mutual respect and effective communication;
- Ensure consistency and fairness in how EGSC responds to customer service requests;
- Make it easy and accessible for customers and staff to understand how we address customer service requests;
- Provide guidance for customers and Council staff when interacting and or communicating with each other;
- Ensure customers receive appropriate level of service within the bounds of available resources;
- Improve customer service based on feedback by ensuring ongoing staff training, best industry practice and consultation; and
- Improve the use relevant systems to ensure workflow efficiencies and accountability at EGSC.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Customer Contact and /or Correspondence with EGSC

Verbal Contact

When a customer contacts EGSC for reasons other than a straightforward request of factual information, the contact must be logged into EGSC's Customer Request Module (CRM) by the customer service unit so that the contact details are captured and can be directed to the relevant Action Officer.

The customer will then be contacted with a response and/or the appropriate action taken within two business days by the Action Officer unless resolved at first point of contact by the Customer Service Unit.

A verbal response from EGSC staff is acceptable provided the matter is resolved or actioned within 10 business days and as long as the response is recorded on file with a self-explanatory note detailing what action has been taken in response to the request and name of the person contacted.

For the purpose of this policy, if a customer contact and/or response has no self-explanatory notes on file, will be deemed as no response provided.

A written response from EGSC is required if specifically requested by the customer, or is mandated by legislation.

Where a written response is requested in relation to a complex or sensitive matter, the Action Officer may request written confirmation of the request.

Written Correspondence

When a customer contacts EGSC in writing the Information Management Unit will register the document into the EDRMS.

Council Staff are responsible of registering any written contact from customer that has been received directly by them into the EDRMS. (for e.g. emails received from customer on individual staff members email address).

EGSC staff will provide a response to the customer within 10 business days from the date of receipt.

A verbal response in person or over the phone is acceptable in all instances as long as the response is recorded on file with a self-explanatory note detailing what action has been taken in response to the request and name of the person contacted.

For the purpose of this policy, if a customer contact and/or response has no self-explanatory notes on file, it will be deemed as no response provided.

A written response from EGSC staff is required if specifically requested by the customer, or is mandated by legislation and must be registered in Council's EDRMS.

When is a response finalised?

A Response is considered to be finalised when the Action Officer has:

- (a) Responded to the customer and has taken the requested action; and
- (b) The relevant documentation is noted and/or registered in CRM and/or in EDRMS with a self-explanatory note detailing what action has been taken in response to the request; and
- (b) The relevant information and/or decisions have been communicated to the customer irrespective of any delay, outcome or change within the response timeframes; or
- (d) Customer Service Unit has resolved the request from customer at first Contact, action officer has been tasked and the customer has been advised of all relevant information.

2.2 Customer Compliments and Complaints

Council values customer feedback and insight to evaluate internal processes, review decisions and provide services to high standards. Feedback from our customers is valuable for continuous improvement of our services.

Please refer to 2.1 Customer Contact with Council and 2.3 for response time frames depending on whether compliments or complaint were made verbally or in writing.

The procedures for the management and review of complaints are specified in the supporting document: *Customer Response and Complaints Resolution Procedure*.

2.3 Response Timeframes

Written Correspondence requiring a response

An appropriate response as per point 2.1 to correspondence will be forwarded within **10 business days** of receipt. This can be either an interim (advising customer of current status and timelines for progress or delay) or a substantive response (advising final decision, resolution, completion or fulfilment).

Where a written response is requested in relation to a complex or sensitive matter, the Action Officer may take up to **30 business days** to resolve the matter but the customer must be responded to initially within 10 business days.

Verbal Contacts requiring a response

Action Officers will attempt to respond to unresolved telephone requests before the **end of two business days**.

Exclusions or Exemptions to response timeframes:

Some applications / permits / items of correspondence, forwarded to the Shire will require processing in various ways, and alternate timeframes exist as follows:

Building Certificates and Building Consent Reports	Correctly completed Building Certificate applications and Building Consent Reports will be finalised within 15 business days of being received.
Community Event Applications	Correctly completed applications for Community Events will be finalised within 35 business days of being received.
Freedom of Information Requests	Correctly completed Freedom of Information requests, which are received with the appropriate application fee, will be responded to within 45 days of the application being received.
Land Information Certificates	Correctly completed Land Information Certificate applications will be completed within 10 business days of being received, using the latest available information. Upon written request and payment of an additional service fee, Council will provide Urgent Land Information Certificates within 24 hours of the correctly completed application and fee being received.
Local Laws Permit Applications (Keeping of Animals, Community Signs, Domestic Animal Businesses, Fundraising, Itinerate Trade, Kerbside Numbering, Livestock Grazing and Goods on Footpath)	Applications for Local Laws permits will be finalised within 20 business days of a correctly completed application being received.

<p>Local Laws Permits Renewals</p> <p>(Keeping of Animals, Community Signs, Domestic Animal Businesses, Fundraising, Itinerate Trade, Kerbside Numbering, Livestock Grazing and Goods on Footpath)</p>	<p>Applications for the renewal of all Local Laws Permits will be finalised within 10 business days of a correctly completed application being received.</p>
<p>Planning Applications</p>	<p>The <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> specifies processing requirements for correctly completed planning applications. Processing timeframes can vary dependent on the complexity of the planning permit applications and the need to address other legislation (e.g. <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>).</p> <p>There are no specific timeframes in which Council is required to process planning applications. However, Council seeks to process 80% of planning applications within 60 *statutory days.</p>
<p>Planning Permits – Application to Amend</p>	<p>The <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> specifies processing requirements for correctly completed applications to amend planning permits. Processing timeframes can vary dependent on the complexity of the application to amend a planning permit and the need to address other legislation (e.g. <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>).</p> <p>There are no specific timeframes in which Council is required to process applications to amend planning permits. However, Council seeks to process 80% of planning applications within 60 *statutory days.</p>
<p>Planning Permits – Extensions and Plan Revisions</p>	<p>There is no specified timeframe within the <i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i> regarding processing of planning permit extensions or plan revisions. Processing timeframes vary dependant on the complexity of the request, changes to planning legislation since the grant of the permit, referral requirements and the need to address other legislation (e.g. <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i>).</p> <p>However, Council seeks to process 80% of planning permit extensions or plan revisions within 30 *statutory days.</p>
<p>Registered Premises Renewal Applications</p>	<p>Correctly completed Registered Premises Renewal applications will be finalised within 20 business days of the application being received.</p>

* The term 'statutory day' is defined by legislation and allows for the exclusion of business days by a 'stop the clock' process. In other words, the absolute timeline measured in business days may be extended if one or more of a range of specific factors arises.

Septic Tank Applications	Correctly completed Septic Tank applications will be finalised within 20 business days of the application being received, unless the application needs to be referred to EPA Victoria or East Gippsland Water, in which case a timeframe cannot be specified.
Subdivision Certification	<i>Subdivision (Procedures) Regulations 2011</i> specify processing timelines for correctly completed plans of subdivision for certification. Processing timeframes can vary depending on referral authority responses. Council seeks to certify 90% of plans of subdivision within 49 *statutory days.
Temporary Dwelling Permits	Temporary Dwelling Permits will be finalised within 40 business days of a correctly completed application being received.

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

As a customer focused organisation, customer service is the responsibility of all Councillors, Council staff and external Service Providers including Contractors.

The following table outlines key responsibilities and roles for implementation, compliance and monitoring of this policy:

Role	Responsibility
Customer	Customers have a responsibility to display an appropriate level of courtesy and respect to EGSC staff.
Executive Group	Ensure appropriate governance, training and compliance to the policy.
Managers	Ensure appropriate staffing levels, training and systems are allocated to manage customer contact within the timeframes documented in this Policy. Ensure compliance with the Policy by all staff-members under their supervision.
Immediate Supervisor	Manage all complaints with regards to no or delayed response from staff.
Council Staff	All Staff are responsible for Information Management and Customer Service.

* *The term 'statutory day' is defined by legislation and allows for the exclusion of business days by a 'stop the clock' process. In other words, the absolute timeline measured in business days may be extended if one or more of a range of specific factors arises.*

Information Technology Unit	Ensure support is provided timely to mitigate, eliminate any system related issues causing delay.
Information Management Unit	Ensure timely registration of written correspondence received by them, and task to the appropriate Action Officer. Ensure Council Staff receive necessary training in Information Management and systems.
Action Officer	Ensure that the task is completed, relevant correspondence or response has been made to the customer and all internal stakeholders notified of the information required. The Action officer must delegate the response / task to the correct action officer promptly and ensure that the customer is aware of the change of ownership of the response or task. For e.g. when incorrectly tasked or when action officer delegates for someone else to respond or complete a task. The Action Officer must register all written correspondence from customer in Council's EDRMS when received directly from customer in person or via email.
Customer Service Staff	Ensure timely input of contact (in person and/or over the phone) in CRM attempting to resolve at first contact and tasked to the appropriate Action Officer when necessary and resulting in further action and/ or response required.

4. SCOPE OF POLICY

This Customer Response Policy applies to all Council staff, volunteers and contractors who provide a service for the East Gippsland Shire Council.

This policy is available for public viewing at all Service Centres and Outreach Centres, and can be accessed online at www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

5. REFERENCES / ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Council Plan 2013-17:

This policy relates to the following strategic objective contained within the Council Plan 2013-17.

Stewardship – Our Shire is well managed and supported by resourceful, responsive Organisation.

Goal: Shire Services meet the needs of our communities and stakeholders at an acceptable cost

Strategic Objectives:

4.1.1 Shire services are tailored to community needs

4.1.2 Our reputation enables us to build partnerships and relationships that create mutual benefit.

Relevant Legislation:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*

Related Policies (internal):

- Information Privacy Policy
- Access to Information (Corporate Records) Policy
- Information Management (Records) Policy
- Media Relations Policy
- Protected Disclosure Policy

6. PRIVACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATION

All personal information collected by East Gippsland Shire in connection with a request/complaint will be handled in accordance with all applicable privacy legislation and will be used only for the purpose of investigating the request/complaint.

The customer service policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

7. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term	Meaning
Action Officer	Anyone allocated with the responsibility to complete a task or respond.
Verbal Contact	In person, real-time interaction such as over the counter or by phone.
Written Correspondence	Not in person, delayed or relayed interaction such as email, Australia Post mail, electronic or web-based engagement and social media.
Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the EGSC's level and/or quality of service and policies. A complaint should explain or describe where Council has failed to respond appropriately to a Request for Service or not followed relevant policies. A complaint does not include a Request for Service.
Compliment	A compliment is an expression of appreciation, praise, commendation or admiration.
Date of Receipt	Is the time and day when contact and/or correspondence is received by EGSC and is registered in EGSC's Customer Request Module (CRM) and/or EDRMS.
EGSC	East Gippsland Shire Council.
Feedback	A complaint, compliment, opinion or suggestion.
Council Response	Communication by EGSC staff to the customer.

Term	Meaning
Internal Ombudsman	Director Corporate, a member of EGSC's Executive Group, holds the office of Internal Ombudsman.
Task	Action required in responding and/or resolving a customer contact or correspondence within a defined period of time.
CRM	Customer Request Module
EDRMS	Electronic Document and Records Management System

CONTACT DETAILS

Telephone: (03) 5153 9500
1300 555 886 (local residents cost of local call)
(03) 5153 9531 (TTY)

Mail: East Gippsland Shire, PO Box 1618, Bairnsdale, Vic. 3875

Fax: (03) 5153 9576

In Person: Bairnsdale Customer Service Centre, 24 Service Street, Bairnsdale
Lakes Entrance Service Centre, 18 Mechanics Street, Lakes Entrance
Orbost Service Centre, 1 Ruskin Street, Orbost
Omeo Service Centre, 179 Day Avenue, Omeo
Paynesville Service Centre, 55 The Esplanade, Paynesville
Mallacoota Service Centre, 70 Maurice Avenue Mallacoota
Corporate Centre, 273 Main Street, Bairnsdale

Buchan Outreach Centre, 6 Davies Street, Buchan
Cann River Outreach Centre, 11 Genoa Street, Cann River
Bendoc Outreach Centre, 18 Dowling Street, Bendoc

Email: feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au

Internet: www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au via 'Report an Issue' tab on the home page.

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